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AUTHOR Karas, Elizabeth A.
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ABSTRACT

A practicum, carried out at a Head Start program in a large southern United States school district, was designed to use inservice training and print and video resources to help Head Start teachers and parents become more knowledgeable about the Head Start Policy Council (HSPC), which involves parents in the decision making in the Head Start program. It was well documented that teachers and parents were not well-informed about the Policy Council, which meant that the local program was out of compliance with the Head Start On-Site Program Review Instrument (OSPRI). Five expected outcomes of the program, reflecting increased teacher and parent knowledge and involvement, were defined; these outcomes were assessed by OSPRI criteria, a teacher questionnaire, results of HSPC elections, attendance at a first meeting, self-assessment results, and an informal telephone poll of parents. Teachers were given inservice training, which familiarized them with research about parent involvement in education and HSPC; they also received monthly follow-up training materials to develop a permanent resource file. Parents attended meetings and received a core parent handbook and additional print information. Analysis of quantitative data revealed that the project goal was attained: teachers and parents did become more knowledgeable about the HSPC, and parents were more involved in the HSPC. (Six appendices include questionnaires and agendas for training sessions and meetings. Contains 15 references.) (TM)

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# Increasing Parent and Teacher Understanding of the Head Start Policy Council Through Improved Communication Activities

by

Elizabeth A. Karas

Cluster XL

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A Practicum II Report Presented to the
Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

NOVA SOUTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

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PRACTICUM APPROVAL SHEET

This practicum took place as described.

Verifier: Douglas K. Whittaker

Douglas Whittaker, Ed.D.

Director of Curriculum Services
Title

Fort Myers, Florida
Address

June 6, 1994
Date

This practicum report was submitted by Elizabeth A. Karas under the direction of the adviser named below. It was submitted to the Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education at Nova Southeastern University.

Approved:

June 23, 1994
Date of Final Approval of Report

Roberta Wong Bouverat
Roberta Wong Bouverat, Ph.D., Adviser

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ABSTRACT

Increasing Parent and Teacher Understanding of the Head Start Policy Council Through Improved Communication Activities. Karas, Elizabeth A., 1994: Practicum Report, Nova Southeastern University, Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies. Child and Youth Studies/Preschool Education/At-Risk/Staff Development/School District/Parent Participation/Parent School Relationship/Communication

This practicum was designed to help Head Start teachers and parents become more knowledgeable about the policy council, a parent involvement opportunity in the Head Start Program, by using training, and print and video resources. Inservice training for teachers was designed and presented and included follow up training information. Teachers were encouaged to apply learning by training parents. Parents received additional print information. Teacher participants received staff development points for the free training.

The writer developed the inservice agenda and training objectives which familiarized teachers with research about parent involvement in education, and the Head Start Policy Council. Follow up training materials were selected and sent monthly to teachers resulting in a permanent resource file. The writer developed a sample parent training meeting agenda and a core parent handbook in several languages, and selected and distributed additional information to parents resulting in a comprehensive parent handbook.

Analysis of the quantitative data revealed that the teachers and parents became more knowledgeable about the Policy Council as demonstrated in a teacher questionnaire, an informal telephone poll of parents, the policy council elections and first meeting date, and the Head Start program self-assessment results.

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# CHAPTER I

# INTRODUCTION

## Description of Community

The work setting is a Head Start program under the auspices of a large school district which serves approximately 33,000 children. The school district is in a southern state and encompasses rural, suburban, and urban areas with residents whose socioeconomic status range from poverty-level to upper class.

The 38 Head Start classes are situated at 22 elementary school sites scattered throughout the district. The Head Start classes are composed of 4-year-old at-risk children who are eligible for either the state early intervention program or for the Head Start program. Each class has 20 children. Eligibility requirements allow children to participate whose parents prove poverty-level or near poverty-level incomes, or who have other at-risk factors such as a mild disability, foster child status, or other condition which would inhibit a child's successful development in school.

The school district is subject to a court-ordered busing decree to equalize minority and majority populations, therefore the minority Head Start children are often bused out of the community in which they live to

attend a school of assignment which may be as much as ten miles away.

The school principals are responsible for the daily, direct supervision of the Head Start classes and the teaching staff. The Head Start program is administered at the central office level and provides support services to the principals, teachers, and to the enrolled children and families through the coordination of health, social work, and parent involvement and educational services.

## Writer's Work Setting and Role

The writer's title is program coordinator. Job responsibilities include grant writing for the Head Start grant, the prekindergarten state grant, the First Start grant, and the Even Start grant. The writer is responsible for maintaining compliance with applicable federal and state laws and for administering the program in general. Direct supervision of nearly 28 employees and indirect supervision of 90 others is included in the assignment, as is consultation with principals and other district administrative personnel.

The writer has an undergraduate degree in Early Childhood, a Master degree in Library Science, an Educational Specialist degree in Administration and Supervision, and is working on an Ed.D. in Child and Youth Studies. The writer is a member of various professional organizations and councils and has served on local and

state boards both in voluntary, elected and appointed positions. Quality children's programs for at-risk preschool children and families have been and continue to be the focus of concern for the writer.

# CHAPTER II

# STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

## Problem Description

Federal Head Start regulations require programs to provide opportunities for parents to become involved in children's education. According to the regulations, parents must be encouraged to participate in decision-making activities regarding the program. The policy council is one of the decision-making bodies of the Head Start program which takes place at the local level. According to Head Start Program Performance Standards (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1984), the policy council must be made up of at least 50% parents of presently enrolled children. The parent representatives must be elected by parents of presently enrolled children.

However, the policy council concept, composition and functions are unusual in typical public education organizations. Therefore, in the writer's work setting, new teachers and first-time Head Start parents were not naturally familiar with the policy council. The Head Start teaching staff were not selected on the basis of prior knowledge about a Head Start policy council, but on training and ability in the early childhood classroom in general. Children were not selected on the basis of

parents' prior knowledge about the policy council, or on parent willingness to participate on the council; children were selected on the basis of eligibility.

Moreover, the 38 Head Start classrooms had been placed throughout the district according to the economic need in the community feeding the school. The schools with the highest percentage of children eligible for free lunch under the Chapter I Economic Needs Survey were determined to be those schools showing the greatest economic need. Since not enough funding was available to allow all eligible children in the community to participate in an early intervention program, the Head Start classes had been apportioned according to the Chapter I survey. Sometimes the percentage of children receiving free lunch was so high that more than one class was placed at that school site, hence the 22 centers. It was clear, therefore, that the placement of classrooms was based on community need. Facilitation of policy council formation was not an important element in the classroom placement decision.

Yet, the successful formation of the policy council is a complex task and must be accomplished each year. It is dependant on all involved parties - central staff, teachers, and parents - having information about the policy council so that policy council activities could be carried out. In the writer's work setting, teachers and

parents may not have had information about the policy council at hand.

Imparting information to where it did not previously exist implies that communication is taking place, that those with knowledge/information are sharing the knowledge/information with those who need it, and that the knowledge/information is being adequately received. Successful communication activities regarding the policy council should have ensured that the policy council formation and implementation was occurring smoothly and in a timely fashion.

The Head Start program did employ communication activities about the policy council involving teachers. Central Head Start staff shared brief, verbal, introductory information with teachers about the policy council during new teacher orientation.

Brief mention of the policy council, as a parent involvement opportunity, was also made by teachers to parents on the first day of school. The policy council was included in a long list of topics to be touched upon by the teacher. This list had been provided by central office staff with the policy council section having two short sentences of explanation. However, school orientation was extremely busy. Children were visiting the class for the first time, and teachers were taking care of a multitude of welcoming tasks designed to familiarize parents and children with the classroom.

Consequently, little time was spent explaining any one topic, including the policy council.

At a later date, teachers sent children home with a paper concerning the policy council for parents to read. The paper, emanating from the central office, contained a single paragraph, written in English, briefly explaining the policy council. The paper also had a tear-off portion for parents to return to the teacher if they wanted to volunteer for the policy council. If parents had a question about the policy council paper, the teacher may have been contacted.

The next step in the process was that the teacher sent ballots to the parents with the names of any parents who had volunteered to be on the policy council. The parents were to return the ballot with a vote as to who should have been the representative. Typically, the parents rarely returned the volunteer tear-off sheets the first time the sheets were sent out. Teachers found that repeated sheets had to be sent home in order to get even one parent volunteer. The ballots were also rarely returned and often had to be repeatedly sent. However, once the policy council representative had been voted upon, his or her name was forwarded to the central Head Start office for inclusion on the master policy council list. When each of the classes had a representative, the policy council met for the first time.

Teachers were the primary sources of program information for parents. In order to share information or respond to questions from parents about the policy council, teachers needed to have understood what it was. In order for parents to have felt comfortable enough to volunteer for the policy council, parents needed to fully understand what it was. Finally, in order to have been elected by peers to serve on the policy council, parents must have made use of an election system that could work efficiently. The information sharing about the policy council used by the Head Start program and described above was insufficient. The result was the slow and cumbersome formation and implementation of the Head Start policy council. In brief, then, teachers and parents were not well informed about the policy council, a parent involvement opportunity in the Head Start program.

## Problem Documentation

The fact that teachers and parents were not well informed about the policy council was documentable. Evidence of this problem could be found in several sources.

In March, 1993 the Head Start program conducted a self-audit on its program for the 1992-93 year. The Head Start On-Site Program Review Instrument (OSPRI) (Community Development Institute, 1991) was used as the audit tool. This is the same tool that is officially used by Head

Start Peer Review Teams which audit Head Start programs for federal authorities. The OSPRI is made up of indicators which, if found to be present, contribute to the compliance of the local program with standard federal requirements.

Two indicators on the OSPRI for 1992-93 had been marked "out of compliance" with required standards. One of the indicators was 135.A. The out of compliance designation meant that when teachers were asked, four out of five said that they had not had enough information to train parents about the policy council. The other out of compliance indicator was 143.C. This meant that when parents were asked, three out of five said that they did not understand the policy council. The problem situation, that teachers and parents did not have enough information about the policy council, was, therefore, documented in the OSPRI which reviewed Head Start program operations for the 1992-93 year.

In addition to the OSPRI results, the fact that parents did not understand the policy council was further documented through a retrospective review of the parent involvement records. It was desirable to have one parent representative for each class on the policy council. However, the parent involvement records showed that out of the Head Start program's 33 classes in operation in 1992-93, no policy council representatives had been elected by September 30, only 2 had been elected by October 31, and

only 23 had been cumulatively elected by November 30. The first policy council meeting was held in December, 1992. The first meeting should have taken place earlier in the program year, perhaps in October or the beginning of November. The late formation date of the policy council indicated that there was a problem regarding the establishment of the policy council.

## Causative Analysis

There were three major reasons why teachers and parents were not well informed about the policy council. The first was that teachers may not have known about the policy council because they were new; the second was that the Head Start parents were reluctant to pay attention to or to participate in something with which they had no previous experience; and the third was that the communication system and activities employed in sharing policy council information with teachers and parents were currently insufficient.

In recent years, expansion of the Head Start program had taken place and caused a number of new Head Start teachers to be hired. During program year 1992-93, there were three new classrooms added with new teachers hired to conduct them. Natural attrition had also occurred; four teachers who had taught in the program the previous year had either changed teaching assignment, retired, or moved out of the area, and new teachers were hired to replace

them. In 1992-93, a total of 7 out of 33 teachers were new to the program. The teachers had no previous experience working with Head Start.

As stated earlier, the new teachers were not hired because of prior knowledge about the Head Start policy council, but because of educational background in early childhood and their expected ability to teach preschool children. The problem documentation illustrated that four out of five teachers reported that they did not have enough information about the policy council. While teacher names did not appear on the OSPRI document, it was safe to assume that at least a few of the teachers who reported this to the auditors were new teachers to the Head Start program.

The Head Start program parents were, for the most part, predominantly female and single, from low socioeconomic, minority and/or culturally diverse backgrounds, and they were generally under-educated and therefore un- or under-employed. These factors indicated that the parents had probably had few successful experiences with an educational system, or with a job which empowered them to be decision-makers. Therefore, it was likely that the parents had no context for understanding parent involvement in education, particularly at the decision-making level, and perceived a number of barriers to involvement in their children's program.

The third major cause of teachers and parents not being well informed about the policy council was the program's current inadequate communication system employed to give teachers and parents information about the council. The amount of information, the timing of the information delivery, the manner and language in which it was delivered, and the frequency of information sharing were elements in the inadequate communication system.

For example, only brief, preliminary information about parent involvement opportunities in Head Start was shared with the parents by the social workers during the enrollment process. The process typically began in February of the program year preceding actual entrance of the child into the program. Thus, the initial parent involvement information in general, and policy council information in particular, was only a dim memory for parents when children actually stepped over the classroom threshold in August.

The next time the parents heard about parent involvement and the policy council was at class orientation on the first day of school. As previously mentioned, the policy council was one topic of many covered during this time. The few sentences about the policy council uttered by teachers probably was forgotten in the excitement of the new school experience for children and parents.

Following this, parents were sent brief written information about the policy council and asked to volunteer for the council. The note might not have been in the parent's primary language, since many program parents were from culturally diverse backgrounds, and print material may not have been the best information tool for them. Consequently, the volunteer sheets were rarely returned.

The ballots with one or more volunteer names of potential policy council members were then sent to the parents. The parents probably did not know the people on the ballot since the only likely time they might have met them was at the class orientation where so much else was going on. Consequently, the ballots were also rarely returned because parents had no opinion about the vote choices. No other information was sent to parents about the policy council following the efforts described above.

New teachers participated in a day-long new teacher orientation where a multitude of topics relating to the Head Start program were covered, with parent involvement and the policy council being among them. Because of the complex nature of Head Start and the small amount of time, all of the topics were covered in a cursory way, including the policy council. No other information sharing communication activities about the policy council took place with just the teachers. However, teachers were used as the conduit for the brief notes sent home to the

parents explaining the policy council and requesting a vote. Therefore, the teachers did not have a background understanding of why the policy council had to be established, what the composition of the council should include, and what council functions were, as well as other details. Consequently, questions that parents might have asked teachers regarding the policy council might not have been answered appropriately.

## Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

Head Start has been a pioneer program in the field of early intervention for children who are at-risk of educational failure. Head Start was one of the first programs designed to be comprehensive in nature, and to meet the needs of disadvantaged children within their social context. In recent years, Head Start has received much publicity which has increased public awareness of the program, but the detailed components of Head Start are not as well known.

For instance, the Head Start program requires that opportunities be provided parents of enrolled children to encourage parents to become involved in children's education. Parent involvement opportunities are defined in the Head Start Program Performance Standards (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1984). Local programs must urge parents to observe or volunteer in the child's classroom, to participate in parent education

programs, to work with the child at home on activities which will support the child's development, and to participate in decision-making about the program through such bodies as the policy council.

Familiar public school educational programs have not typically mandated the Head Start model of parent involvement. However, review of the literature gave evidence that parents and educators across the nation were beginning to arrive at the consensus that both educators and parents were critical in providing successful outcomes for children. Working separately, educators and parents were often at odds with each other. Working together, overcoming barriers, they became partners in the education of children, and all reaped the benefits of the cooperative effort.

The literature further described how society has changed in the last twenty years. More families have had the economic need to send both parents into the workplace. It was estimated that 70% of women with school-aged children were working outside of the home. It was further estimated that approximately 25% of all American children were currently living in single parent homes, and women headed a majority of these households (Zigler and Hall, 1991). The above situations, among others, have created a family reliance on the educational organization to educate children without the underpinnings of parental involvement.

The delegation by parents of entire educational responsibility to the educational organization has become a typical mode of action. Just as the putting out of fires has been delegated to the fire department, and no interference was expected or desired by either the citizens or the fire fighters, so education has been relegated to the educational organization. Neither the parents nor the professional educators have sought shared responsibility in the delegation model of education (Seeley, 1989).

However, education has not kept pace with the changes in society. Technological advances have required that our children be better educated in order for the United States to maintain its economic stature in the world. More and more reports have indicated that the traditional school organizational structure has not been doing the job of educating children, particularly minority children (Quality Education for Minorities Project, 1990).

Radical change in our nation's schools has been called for to meet the challenges of the 21st Century. Collaborative efforts of teachers, students, and parents working toward a common goal of school success has been described as being a potential cornerstone in the new structure of American education. The collaborative or partnership approach to producing a better student product is a different paradigm than the delegation model. The partnership model has been built upon the theory that a

child does not learn in isolation of his entire environment, and that it takes everyone's efforts--parents, teachers, students, and the community--to maximize the positive outcomes in education (Williams, Jr., and Chavkin, 1989).

The educational organization has a hard time working around or in spite of parents. The educational organization mission, to provide successful learning outcomes for children, is seen as successful only if parents, among others, are satisfied with the results. Parents are key stakeholders in the educational organization and, as such, their identities, expectations, needs and capabilities should be assessed by that organization, and taken into account when conducting activities to fulfill the mission (Bryson, 1990).

What was parent involvement in the mission of the educational organization? The literature revealed that "parent involvement" was a broad and loosely defined term. To some it meant parents helping with fund raisers for the school; to others it meant parents helping in the classroom or on field trips. Much of the literature on parent involvement revolved around defining what it was, how it might be described, what models may have elucidated the concept, or what elements should have been present. In nearly all instances, however, "parent involvement" inferred a connection between home and school, that

important link forged out of mutual interest of educators and parents in their children.

Henderson, Marburger, and Ooms (1986) described parent involvement through classification of parent roles in education. Parents might have been "partners" in education. The partner role was the most elemental in that parents performed the basic requirements for the child's education and social development. Examples included parents having ensured that children were properly dressed and that they arrived at school on time.

At a higher level, parents might have been "collaborators and problem solvers". Here parents rewarded and encouraged achievement, read to the children at home, reacted to school rule infractions, and helped school personnel resolve problems which might have arisen with a child's learning or behavior.

Parents might have been acting in the role of "audience". Parents must have moved from a home base and have been present at the child's school to attend concerts, plays, exhibitions, and athletic events. While being an audience was essentially a passive role, parents, educators and children gained in that parents learned more about the school, educators felt as if their efforts were appreciated, and children felt good about parent interest in the place the children spent so much of their time.

Parents might have acted as "supporters" by serving as room mothers (or fathers), classroom volunteers,

participants in parent teacher organizations, parent advocates for other parents of special needs children, and as participants in many other parent-to-parent activities.

Finally, parents might have acted as "advisors and co-decision makers". Some schools used parents as members of advisory councils which function as monitoring or advisory bodies. While the role might have been perfunctory in some instances, in others, such as Head Start, real power was wielded by parents (Henderson, et al., 1986).

The literature indicated that Head Start parent involvement served three purposes ("Importance of Parents", 1988). The first was parent education; the second was parent empowerment; and the third was to maintain program responsiveness and relevance through parent involvement in decisions about the program, including personnel matters, program design, budgets, and program evaluation.

Further review of the literature gave evidence that there were numerous barriers to effective parent involvement in educational programs. For instance, many parents of disadvantaged children have themselves had poor experiences with schools as they were growing up (Florida Department of Education, 1988). To even step foot on school grounds might have been very threatening to parents. Then, too, many of the parents' current school contacts have been about older children's misbehavior or

lack of achievement. The reversal of these attitudinal patterns of inferiority, insecurity and resentment were challenges requiring sensitivity and patience.

Minority and immigrant parents have often felt a well-founded lack of cultural understanding on the part of school personnel who indeed indulged in stereotyping these families as deficient (Davies, 1987). Many parents did not realize that they had the right to be part of some educational decisions; these rights might not have existed in the parent's country of origin. Nor have some parents been able to read announcements of involvement opportunities since they might have been illiterate themselves, or monolingual in a language other than English.

Parents of children with disabilities might have experienced great frustration in trying to obtain appropriate services for their children (Gerry, 1987). Sometimes school officials might have seen parents as merely furnishing the required signatures on necessary documentation. Many parents of special needs children have carried the added burden of being economically disadvantaged or other than English speaking, thereby increasing the barriers to effective parent involvement.

Single parenthood has also created special barriers to parent involvement. In many instances, single parents have had the sole responsibility for the economic support of their offspring. Work schedules have prohibited single

parents from volunteering at the school (Florida Department of Education, 1988).

Teachers have often been the unwitting cause of barriers to effective parent involvement because of attitudes they hold about parents (Becher, 1984). Some teachers found it difficult to sustain the role of "expert" in education when parents became involved. Some teachers believed that too much time was taken up with planning for parent involvement, and that too much time was taken up with preparing parents to help in the classroom. Some teachers believed that parents might teach children the wrong things, not follow rules, use less than perfect English when speaking to children, and generally cause classroom disruption. Further, some teachers believed that parents would talk about experiences in class to friends and, therefore, break professional rules of student confidentiality. Finally, some teachers believed that parents would be critical of teaching skills.

However, the research became increasingly clear that parent involvement was really beneficial to the mission of education, that of providing successful learning experiences for children. The studies found that the creation of a positive learning environment at home, where learning was valued and encouraged, and where parents of at-risk children had been given training in how to create this environment, had a powerful impact on children's

achievement (Henderson, et al., 1986). Children's learning was influenced greatly by their own attitudes about themselves and their control over the environment. The attitudes were formed at home with intricate additional influences emanating from the school and the community. When parents encouraged success at home, and the school seconded the effort, a positive cycle was established.

Evaluation studies of early intervention programs for at-risk children confirmed the belief that family-based intervention was the most effective strategy for positive change in children (Zigler and Hall, 1991). When compared with like children, those who participated in quality preschool programs with parent involvement scored higher on school tests in later elementary school (Berrueta-Clement, Schweinhart, Barrett, Epstein, and Weikart, 1984).

The evidence also demonstrated that parents, children and the schools themselves were augmented when parents had been involved in children's education (Becher, 1984). Parent involvement gave parents more positive attitudes about school and school personnel. These parents, in turn, helped gather community support for schools. Parents extended school involvement to become involved in the community as well. Parents also became more self-confident about themselves as a result of involvement, and were more likely to enroll in programs to enhance personal

development. Parents became better teachers of children at home, had a better understanding of child development, and had closer relationships with children when they become involved in children's formal education.

Substantial evidence indicated that children showed clear academic gains when parents had been involved in children's education. Low income and minority children gained the most when parents were involved, and parents did not need to be well-educated to help their children (Henderson, et al., 1986).

Finally, when teachers were associated with parent involvement efforts, the changes they made helped schools to become more effective educational institutions (Becher, 1984). When teachers were involved in parent involvement efforts, they allotted more time to professional and instructional activities. Teachers tended to become more involved in curriculum by designing activities which were more student-oriented rather than teacher-oriented. Also, when teachers were involved in a parent involvement effort, they tended to allot more time to the instructional function.

In conclusion, the research indicated that involving parents in children's education took planning on the part of the educational organization. Understanding parent involvement was a critical element necessary for appropriate planning. Ultimately, the strength of the educational organization may rest on how well it has

involved parents. It has become apparent that parent involvement is not a fad; it is fundamental to a healthy system of education.

# CHAPTER III

# ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

## Goals and Expectations

The goal of this writer was to increase the understanding of Head Start teachers and parents about the policy council, a parent involvement opportunity in Head Start. A deeper understanding of the policy council would enable teachers to become committed to parent involvement and to help guide parents to become involved in the policy council. A deeper understanding of the policy council would enable parents to decide if they want to volunteer for the policy council, participate in the election process, and be interested in the activities of the policy council throughout the year.

## Expected Outcomes

The following outcomes were defined for this practicum:

1. Indicator 135.A. of the OSPRI will be marked "in compliance". The compliance designation will mean that five out of five interviewed teachers will have said that they had enough information about the Head Start policy council to train parents.

2. Twenty-five of the 38 Head Start teachers will have checked the six responses that indicate accurate perceptions of the Head Start policy council on the 12-question Policy Council Questionnaire for Teachers (see Appendix A) .

3. Indicator 143.C. of the OSPRI will be marked "in compliance". The compliance designation will mean that five out of five interviewed parents will have said that they understood the policy council.

4. Twenty-five of 38 parent representatives will be elected by October 31, and the first policy council meeting will be held no later than November, meaning that parents have enough information about the policy council to participate in the process.

5. Twenty of 38 newly elected policy council parent representatives will respond positively in the poll, Informal Telephone Questions for New Parent Policy Council Members (see Appendix B), by answering "Yes" to three of the six questions asked of them.

## Measurement of Outcomes

The Head Start On-Site Program Review Instrument (OSPRI) was chosen to measure the success of Outcomes 1 and 3. The OSPRI was developed by the Community Development Institute under a cooperative agreement with the federal Health and Human Services, Human Development

Services, Administration of Children, Youth and Families. The purpose of the tool was to achieve consistency in evaluating Head Start programs around the nation to determine compliance with the Head Start Program Performance Standards. The OSPRI is the same tool that is officially used by Head Start Peer Review Teams which audit Head Start programs for federal authorities. The OSPRI was selected as an assessment instrument for the practicum because of its official use.

The OSPRI divides the Head Start program into component areas, such as Parent Involvement, Education, etc. Each component area has a number of indicators which, when developed, were field tested and determined with national input to represent best practice approaches to achieving the Head Start objectives explicit in the Program Performance Standards.

The self-audit for program year 1993-94 was to be conducted in March, 1994 after practicum solution strategies had been implemented. Five teams were to conduct the audit using the OSPRI, and individual members of the teams were to review separate components. Each team was to visit different program centers in various geographical locations of the district. All teams then were to get together to compile program-wide data. A single OSPRI document was to be produced to represent a full program review. Included in the review would be examination of indicators 135.A. and 143.C.

Measurement of Outcome 2 was to have been made using a writer designed true or false questionnaire, the Policy Council Questionnaire for Teachers (see Appendix A). The questionnaire contained 12 items which related to the composition, establishment, function, and operation of the policy council. Six of the items were correct statements about the policy council, and six were incorrect statements. Teachers were to be given 10 minutes to complete the questionnaire. The questionnaire was to have been given after inservice training had taken place to determine whether the training had increased teacher understanding of the policy council.

Measurement of Outcome 4 was to have been made through a review of the parent involvement records relating to the election of policy council representatives, and the date of the first policy council meeting. The review was to include the cumulative counting of officially elected policy council representatives from each class on specific dates: September 30, October 31, and November 30, 1993. The review was also to include the perusal of records, such as meeting notices and agendas, documenting when the first policy council meeting was to take place. The date of the first policy council meeting was dependent on the successful election of policy council representatives.

Finally, Outcome 5 was to be measured using a writer designed poll, the Informal Telephone Questions for New

Parent Policy Council Members (see Appendix B). Each newly elected parent representative was to have been polled by telephone to informally ask if the parent was comfortable with his or her understanding of the policy council. The poll was used to determine if parents were given information which they understood about the policy council as a result of teacher training.

# CHAPTER IV

# SOLUTION STRATEGY

## Discussion and Evaluation of Possible Solutions

Teachers and parents were not well informed about the policy council, a parent involvement opportunity in the Head Start program. The goal of this writer was to increase the understanding of Head Start teachers and parents about the policy council. There were a number of solutions to the problem suggested in the literature.

For instance, Williams, Jr., and Chavkin (1989) stated that seven elements must be present for parent involvement programs to be successful. The first element was to have written policies. Policies help to define, clarify, support, and substantiate the importance and thrust of parent involvement.

The second element was administrative support. Administrative support might be demonstrated in three ways:

1. Through allocation of funds needed to implement programs.

2. Through allocation of materials, supplies, and space needed to carry out programs.

3. Through the designation of people needed to coordinate and implement the program.

The third element was training. Not only do parents need to be trained in effective parent involvement skills, but teachers and school administrators need to be trained to improve communication skills, and to develop partnership skills.

The fourth element of a successful parent involvement program was the refining of the partnership approach. All aspects of a school program needs to be reviewed to see how parents could act as partners so that they might develop a sense of ownership and pride in the school efforts.

A fifth essential element was the evolution of a workable two-way communication system between home and school. The communication system might include such activities as home visits, parent-teacher conferences, written communications in the form of notes, notices, or announcements, visits to the school, and telephone calls.

Networking with other programs which also support parent involvement programs was a sixth important element. Networking could lead to a sharing of resources, information, and technical expertise, all of which could improve individual effort.

A final critical element in a parent involvement program according to Williams, Jr. and Chavkin (1989) was evaluation. At important points in the program cycle, activities should be monitored to see how well the activities are progressing. Adjustments might be made if

problems exist, and other modifications might occur if conditions change. Evaluation was also useful to verify the positive benefits of a successful parent involvement program.

The literature also suggested that teachers might be helped to overcome negative attitudes, should they exist consciously or unconsciously, about parent involvement (Becher, 1984). Teachers could be made aware of the literature about parent involvement. Teachers could be provided support for beginning efforts at involving parents. In addition, teachers might need help in identifying feelings and concerns about parent involvement, and in developing skills to resolve conflict. Finally, teachers might need help to modify their view of education. Instead of looking at education solely through their own eyes, teachers could be helped to look at children's progress through the eyes of parents who also want children to succeed.

The literature suggested strategies for breaking down the barriers to involving minority and other hard-to-reach parents. These strategies included the following elements (Florida Department of Education, 1988). First, existing resources for interagency and interdisciplinary cooperation needs to be identified for possible use. Next training should take place to encourage interagency and interdisciplinary cooperation. Agreements to cooperate could then be drawn up between agencies.

Another strategy was that parent participation must be seen by all groups as important and must be given a high priority with the local organizations. Target populations need to be identified, contact made, and special activities designed to meet the needs of all members of the target populations. Meetings should be held at convenient times, in non-threatening places, and have child-care consistently included. Meetings and notices of meetings should be in the language of the parent. Members of the target community could have been tapped to conduct parent training activities.

In addition, the need for open attitudes was part of the overall strategy (Florida Department of Education, 1988). Teachers and administrators need to focus on the strengths of families, no matter what family origins or configurations, rather than on the differences from a hypothetical and so-called "normal" family.

As the problem was being contemplated by the writer, other ideas which might have impacted on the problem solution came to mind. First, teachers needed either official inservice training in early childhood subjects or college classes to maintain state certification in order to continue to teach preschool children in the public school setting. A solution strategy might have included inservice training where teachers could have earned points toward certification. Training would then have had more

allure than if the training were to taken place with no personal benefit.

Another idea that came to mind was that many elementary schools held "open house" during the first few months of school so that parents could visit the school in the evening. The Head Start classes were, for the most part, included in the school-wide activity. Perhaps "open house" might have been used by teachers to inform parents about the policy council.

A final thought was that the writer was aware from experience that parents responded well to incentives, such as food and entertainment. Parents were more likely to attend meetings or to participate in activities where incentives were offered. Perhaps incentives for parents could have been incorporated into the solution strategy to have increased the chance for success.

## Description and Justification for Solution Selected

The literature provided a rich overview of possible ways to improve parent involvement programs. Many of the strategies suggested by Williams, Jr., and Chavkin (1989) were already being used in the writer's Head Start program. For instance, written policies regarding the policy council in the form of Head Start Program Performance Standards were in place. Administrative support was present in that funds, materials, supplies and space were allocated to carry out the policy council

function, and a parent involvement specialist was designated to coordinate and implement the program. In addition, networking existed with other programs which also supported parent involvement programs.

However, local written policies could have been strengthened to help implement the policy council parent involvement opportunity. Training of both parents and teachers was weak, and the refining of the partnership approach could have been augmented. The Head Start program also needed to restructure its communication system to employ more effective strategies. Monitoring the policy council activities frequently could have also added to the success of the parent involvement program.

As Becher (1984) suggested, the teachers in the Head Start program needed to have been helped to understand the parent involvement effort as well as to identify personal feelings toward it. Therefore, teacher training could have included not only information about parent involvement, but also help for teachers to assess personal feelings concerning parent involvement.

Barriers for the parents of the program needed to have been broken down so that parents would feel more inclined to take advantage of the parent involvement opportunities (Florida Department of Education, 1988). One of the barriers, a tendency for teachers to focus on the limitations of families rather than on family strengths, would have to have been addressed.

The solution strategy actually chosen leaned heavily on the suggestions from the literature. The strategy also related to the causes of why teachers and parents were not well informed about the policy council. The solution had been primarily chosen to strengthen the communication system and the activities currently employed to share policy council information with teachers and parents.

For instance, the writer intended to offer inservice training to the teachers, many of whom were new to assignments with Head Start. The writer was to focus on parent involvement and the policy council during the inservice training, and was to give a writer-designed questionnaire (see Appendix A) to assess teacher understanding of the policy council after the training.

Follow up training was also going to be provided to the teachers on parent involvement in the form of videotapes, articles, and other print materials throughout the practicum implementation period. All materials were to be assessed for relevance to the local program, for positive attitudinal slant toward parent involvement, and for professionalism. For instance, articles that were based on current research, which appeared in well known professional journals, and which related to preschool programs in public school settings were going to be considered desirable. At the end of the practicum implementation period, the materials which had been sent to teachers were going to be reviewed for possible

inclusion in a permanent teacher resource file on parent involvement and the policy council. The resource file might have then been used in future years.

The training should have been successful because there should have been sufficient time during a day-long inservice, dedicated solely to parent involvement, to provide adequate information about the policy council. All of the teachers, new and experienced, would have heard the same information at the same time and would have been able to ask questions of the presenters. Teachers should have been enthusiastic about receiving inservice points which could have been used toward certification in early childhood. The on-going opportunities to obtain information about parent involvement and about the policy council were to solidify the initial learning.

Next, each Head Start center site would have been strongly encouraged to hold a parent meeting early in the school year to train parents on the policy council. Teachers were to have been encouraged to identify incentives to attract parents to the meeting. The solution strategy related to another cause of the problem: Parents were reluctant to pay attention to something with which they have had no previous experience. To familiarize parents with parent involvement, videotapes were to be found to illustrate various parent involvement opportunities and were to be shown to parents during the meeting.

In addition, some written material in Spanish and English would have been collected to have been used as an initial core for a parent handbook. The core parent handbook, to which written materials could have later been added, was to have been handed out at the first parent meeting. Some of the material in the core parent handbook was to have related to the policy council.

Policy council elections were to have taken place at the first parent meeting held at each center. A follow up telephone call to newly-elected parent policy council representatives was to have been made. The call would have welcomed parents to the policy council and would have informally polled parent understanding of the policy council (see Appendix B).

Additional parent handbook pages were to have been sent parents throughout the year. The pages would have related to the program, parent activities that could have been conducted at home, and to policy council activities. Materials for the handbook would have been chosen on legibility, brevity, relativity to the child, class and program, and policy council. All materials sent to parents during the practicum implementation period would have then been reviewed for possible inclusion in a permanent parent handbook to have been used in future years.

The above intervention solution would have been successful because information about the policy council

would have been given to parents by their teachers in the relaxed forum of a class meeting. The meeting would have been dedicated almost totally to imparting information about the policy council. Parents would have been able to ask questions in a leisurely fashion. The information about the policy council would have been given verbally by the teacher or an interpreter. Information would also have been given in print which the parent could understand since it would have been in the parent's primary language.

The solution strategy would also have been successful because parents would have been able to vote on the policy council representative during the first parent meeting. Parents would, therefore, have seen for whom they were voting, thereby making the vote more meaningful. With the parent representatives elected, the policy council would have been able to hold its first meeting earlier in the program year. In addition, the solution will have been successful because the initial handbooks parents would have taken home from the meeting will have been able to be reviewed at leisure. Information contained in the core parent handbooks about the policy council and other parent involvement opportunities will have solidified verbal information gleaned from the parent meeting. Materials sent subsequently to parents could have built upon the initial parent handbook foundation of information.

It was anticipated that the above activities should have resulted in increased teacher and parent

understanding of the policy council as measured by the expected outcomes described earlier.

## Report of Action Taken

Prior to the implementation of the above activities, the practicum plan was shared with the director of curriculum services, the writer's immediate supervisor. The plan was then shared with the staff development center so that the planned teacher training could earn points for teacher certification.

During the first month of implementation, the inservice training for teachers was mapped out. The training site and date were established in cooperation with the staff development center. Teachers were notified of the upcoming training.

The person in the Head Start parent involvement specialist position had been originally intended to be a co-trainer along with the writer. Shortly before the training, the parent involvement specialist resigned to take another job. The teacher training was to take place before the new parent involvement specialist could be hired, so the former specialist was given a contract to assist with the teacher training on a consultant basis. Together, the writer and consultant reviewed the objectives of the practicum. An agenda for the full day of training was devised (see Appendix C). The major focus of the training was parent involvement in Head Start, and

the policy council was highlighted as a major section of the training. A fact sheet about the local policy council was written in simplistic format and reproduced to be used as a handout for teachers (see Appendix D). The post test, Policy Council Questionnaire for Teachers (see Appendix A) was reproduced for the number of teachers expected to attend.

Other materials for the inservice training were developed. The materials included overhead projector sheets outlining the following topics: Why the educational system needs change; paradigms of parent involvement; reasons for parent involvement; teacher attitudes toward parent involvement; research on parent involvement benefits to children, parents, and teachers; and, parent feelings about being part of children's education.

The Head Start Performance Standards (U.S. Department of Health and Human Welfare, 1984) regarding parent participation in Head Start were gathered in preparation for dissemination to teachers at the training. Copies of the parent involvement section of the OSPRI (Community Development Institute, 1991) were also collected for the teachers. Two local policies were reproduced, one relating to using parents as paid substitutes in the classroom, and the other to providing meals for parents when they volunteer in the classroom. Sample copies of the parent sign-in logs which were to be kept in the

classrooms were also collected to give to teachers during the training. A sample center committee (parent meeting) agenda was reproduced for distribution to teachers (see Appendix E).

Other items collected for all of the teachers were copies of the March/April 1993 National Head Start Bulletin which included an article about parent involvement opportunities in Head Start, and two articles on the benefits of parent involvement. The first article, by Anne Henderson (1987), summarized and highlighted major findings of recent research on the effects of parent involvement on student achievement. The second article, by Rhoda M. Becher (1984), described the major benefits of parent involvement to children, parents, teachers, and the community.

It was decided that teachers should be given the first packet of materials for parents at the teacher training. The parent packets, also called core parent handbooks, would be able to be reviewed with the teachers by the writer and the consultant. Teachers could have questions answered about the materials, and thus be more prepared to answer parent questions later. Therefore, the parent packets were developed with the training deadline in mind instead of during the second month of implementation as originally planned.

The parent packets included the following materials: A welcoming letter from the Head Start program

coordinator; a description of the program including mission, services, and funding; a listing of program personnel in charge of particular components and how to get in touch with each person; a description of parent involvement in the program called "Parents as Partners: Your Role in the Program"; the same policy council fact sheet that teachers were to receive; and various informational sheets concerning program and community resources. All the materials were also translated into Spanish, the second most common language of local Head Start families, so that parents would have access to information most legible to them.

During the second month of implementation, the training for teachers was held as planned, but some unexpected events took place. First, only 30 of the expected 38 teachers attended the training. Two subsequent small group trainings were held for the eight absent teachers. Only the 30 teachers who attended the large group training were eligible for inservice points toward teacher certification, were given the Policy Council Questionnaire for Teachers, and were issued the staff development department evaluation forms to fill out.

Then, two of the trained teachers took leaves of absence for health reasons. Substitutes were placed in charge of the absent teachers' classrooms. The writer's expectations for follow through on training subjects in the two classrooms with substitutes had to be modified.

Another unanticipated event took place. Five of the 38 classes planned for the 1993-94 year were funded with Head Start expansion funds. While all of the teachers of the new classrooms had been hired and had attended the training, two of these classes could not get started until November. The expectation of total implementation as planned was further modified.

During the second month of implementation, the results of the Policy Council Questionnaire for Teachers, and the staff development department workshop evaluation forms were reviewed. Additional teacher materials regarding parent involvement began to be collected.

Preparation for parent training was also begun. Center committee (parent meeting) agendas were solidified. Parent packets (the core parent handbooks) were duplicated in mass quantities in both English and Spanish and distributed to the classrooms. The video, "Head Start: A Nation's Pride", was ordered for purchase for every center and was forwarded to each center when received. Teachers were reminded to set an early parent meeting (center committee) date, and to notify parents of the meeting.

During the third month of implementation, parent training took place as anticipated during the parent meetings, except in the two classrooms which were not yet in operation, and in the two classrooms where substitutes were in charge. Elections for policy council representatives took place, and the election reports were

forwarded to the writer. Follow up telephone calls using the Informal Telephone Questions for New Policy Council Members (see Appendix B) were made to the parent policy council representatives by the new parent involvement specialist. At the parent meetings, teachers introduced the parent packets. Parents could have chosen a packet written in the language with which parents felt most comfortable reading. Following the training meeting, parent packets were either sent home with children to parents who had not come to the meeting, or teachers took the packets to the parents during home visits.

Shortly thereafter, the date, time, and location of the first policy council meeting was established (see Appendix E for agenda). Notice of the meeting was sent to parent policy council representatives and to teachers.

Then, a vehicle was needed to send parent packet or handbook pages home to be added to the original, or core, parent packet. The monthly newsletter, The Parent Involvement Press, a Newsletter for Head Start Parents, was, therefore, established. The newsletter format included a monthly calendar of parent workshop offerings, information about policy council meetings and business, activities (like fingerplays, cup cooking, etc.) for parents and children to do together at home, a changing list of library books that preschool children like to read, and notice of community social service opportunities. Short articles from the education, health,

nutrition, mental health and disabilities Head Start specialists were also included concerning such subjects as normal child development, good early childhood practices, appropriate discipline, and parent involvement in children's education. The articles were either written by the specialists, or submitted by the specialists from non-copywrited sources. The articles were legible, brief, and important to at-risk preschool children and their families and Head Start. The newsletter had a monthly seasonal theme, and included eye-catching illustrations. The Parent Involvement Press was always available in both English and Spanish, and, following the newsletter establishment, was sent home with children the first week of each month.

Materials were gathered in order to continue teacher training in parent involvement. Materials included videotapes, articles, excerpts from neighboring community curriculum guides, papers from special parent involvement institutes, and professional newsletters, among others. The subjects of these materials ranged from developmentally appropriate practices and parent involvement, to parents as first teachers, to best parent involvement ideas, to working with working families, to involving parents in children's transition from preschool to kindergarten, among other topics. The materials were assessed for relevance, applicability, professionalism, and brevity. Print materials were sent monthly to each

classroom teacher to read and file in a parent involvement folder. Audiovisual materials were sent to view and return for shared use.

During the sixth month of implementation, and as informational materials were continuing to be sent to parents and teachers, training for the 1993-94 OSPRI program self-assessment took place. A general training meeting was held on use of the basic OSPRI instrument. Then, the large group was split into smaller groups according to Policy Council member interest in the various Head Start components. Following the training, the OSPRI was conducted by members of the policy council. The results for each component were compiled into one report and presented to the policy council for its information. Following administration of the OSPRI, and as the implementation period drew to a close, all of the parent and teacher materials were reviewed for possible inclusion in permanent parent and teacher handbooks for future program years.

Finally, all of the information gathered during the practicum implementation period was analyzed and evaluated.

# CHAPTER V

# RESULTS, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## Results

The problem that existed in the writer's work setting was that teachers and parents were not well informed about the policy council, a parent involvement opportunity in the Head Start program. The problem existed because new teachers and first-time Head Start parents were not naturally familiar with the policy council concept, composition, and function. Existing activities designed to impart policy council information to teachers and parents were not successful, as indicated by OSPRI results for the 1993-94 program year.

The solution to the problem was to increase teacher understanding of the policy council by providing inservice training to teachers, and to follow up the training with the provision of resources to teachers about parent involvement and the policy council. The solution to the problem was also to increase parent understanding of the policy council through parent training meetings, videotapes, and through written resource material in Spanish and English about the policy council, and other parent involvement activities.

The goal, then, was to increase the understanding of teachers and parents about the policy council through improved communication activities. Specific outcomes were designed for attainment of the practicum goal:

1. Teachers were to have an increased understanding of the Head Start policy council.

Five out of five interviewed teachers said that teachers had enough information about the policy council to train parents, thus indicator 135.A. of the OSPRI was marked "in compliance". While fewer teachers than expected attended the policy council training (30 rather than 38), 25 out of 30 teachers checked the six responses that indicated accurate perceptions of the Head Start policy council on the 12-question Policy Council Questionnaire for Teachers (see Appendix A).

2. Parents were to have an increased understanding of the Head Start policy council.

Five out of five interviewed parents said that they understood the policy council, thus indicator 143.C. of the OSPRI was marked "in compliance". Thirty of the possible 38 parent representatives were elected by October 31, and the first policy council meeting was held on November 9 (see Appendix F). Twenty-one of the 30 elected policy council parent representatives answered "Yes" to three of the six questions asked of them in the poll, Informal Telephone Questions for New Parent Policy Council Members (see Appendix B).

## Discussion

The goal to increase understanding of parents and teachers about the Head Start policy council was reached. According to the established measurement standards, the outcomes were successful. The OSPRI "in compliance" designation for indicator 135.A. demonstrated that teachers had an increased understanding of the Head Start policy council. Increased teacher understanding was further verified through the Policy Council Questionnaire for Teachers, the post test taken by teachers after inservice training.

The OSPRI "in compliance" designation for indicator 143.C. demonstrated that parents had an increased understanding of the policy council. The parent involvement records showed that not only were sufficient numbers of parent policy council representatives elected by October 31, but that when polled, the elected parents responded positively to informal questions designed to assess parent understanding of the policy council. Finally, the first meeting of the policy council was held within an appropriate period of time.

The improved teacher and parent communication activities of teacher and parent training and the sharing of written and other resources about the policy council and parent involvement were successful elements in the attainment of the goal to increase teacher and parent

understanding of the Head Start policy council. Williams, Jr., and Chavkin (1989) had discussed seven elements of successful parent involvement programs. The strategies employed in this practicum highlighted element three, training of parents and teachers, and element five, a workable two-way communication system. Other elements of a successful parent involvement program which were less specifically cited in the planned strategies of the practicum, but which were still present during the implementation of the practicum were: Written policies about parent involvement; administrative support; and program monitoring.

Becher (1984) suggested that teachers needed to be helped to overcome negative attitudes about parent involvement. The teacher training included discussion of research regarding the benefits of parent involvement, and the common misconceptions held by teachers about parents. The teachers verbally expressed surprise and a raised consciousness about both subjects to the writer and the parent involvement consultant conducting the training.

Certain unexpected events took place during the implementation of the practicum, such as the resignation of the parent involvement specialist, and the attendance of a lower number of teachers than expected at the original teacher inservice training. Small adjustments were made to accommodate the unexpected events so that the practicum implementation was not impaired.

Finally, it is the writer's opinion that the strategies to implement improved communication activities to increase teacher and parent understanding of the Head Start policy council were successful, leading the writer to conclude that the practicum plan was adequately thought out, and that the parent involvement program was consequently improved.

## Recommendations

1. It is recommended that the already-developed training modules be used yearly as new teachers and parents enter the program.
2. It is recommended that additional training modules be developed to give to experienced teachers to further increase teacher understanding of parent involvement, the program, the policy council, and the partnership model of education.
3. It is recommended that the collection of teacher resources on parent involvement and the policy council be duplicated and distributed to new teachers, and that additional resources be found to continually update experienced teachers in parent involvement and the policy council.
4. It is recommended that parents who have been parent policy council representatives during the past year be part of the training given to both the teachers and the parents.

5. It is recommended that 10 different teachers a year be given substitutes so that the teachers may attend a policy council meeting to better understand the policy council. Teacher attendance at policy council meetings would, however, be at the discretion of the policy council.
6. It is recommended that the parent handbook, developed as part of the practicum, be annually updated with current parent input, and distributed to every new parent.
7. It is recommended that the parent handbook materials and resources be translated into Haitian Creole, or any other major language read and spoken by a large portion of the Head Start client population.
8. It is recommended that a local policy council meeting be videotaped and vignettes of the meeting shared with new parents of the following year so that parents might better visualize the policy council.
9. It is recommended that school principals and other school administrators be trained in a similar fashion to teachers. Training would enable the principals and administrators to be an additional source of support to the teachers and parents at the school site.

## Dissemination

The writer intends to share the practicum with professional colleagues at the national Head Start Parents Association Conference in the winter of 1994, at the national Head Start association conference in the spring

of 1995, and at the state Head Start association conference in the spring of 1995. Other opportunities to share the practicum activities and results will also be sought such as at the local and national Association for the Education of Young Children conferences as they occur in the upcoming year.

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# APPENDIX A

## POLICY COUNCIL QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS

**POLICY COUNCIL QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TEACHERS**

Dear Teacher,

Please fill out this questionnaire to help us to know how well we shared information about the Policy Council with you. This will enable us to do better in the future. You may use any notes or papers you have been given. Thank you in advance.

The Head Start Staff

**PLEASE PUT A CHECK BEFORE THE STATEMENT YOU THINK IS CORRECT. THIS IS NOT A TEST.**

1. _____ Policy Council meetings are usually held once a month.
2. _____ A Policy Council representative/alternate represents the interest of his/her child's class and should bring back information to the Center Committee.
3. _____ There are more community representatives than parents on the Policy Council.
4. _____ The Policy Council alternate parent member may vote even if the first parent representative is present at the meeting.
5. _____ Policy Council meetings are usually held at night for approximately 5 hours.
6. _____ The Policy Council conducts a program self-evaluation each year.
7. _____ The Policy Council can approve or disapprove program plans, budget, personnel decisions, children's selection criteria, etc.
8. _____ Lots of previous experience in serving on councils is necessary for a parent to be elected to the Policy Council.
9. _____ Policy Council meetings are usually held in a central location.
10. _____ Transportation and child care are available during Policy Council meetings.
11. _____ Training is not provided for the Policy Council members.
12. _____ The Policy Council does not establish a method of hearing and resolving community complaints about the program.

Again, thank you very much!

# APPENDIX B

## INFORMAL TELEPHONE QUESTIONS

## FOR NEW PARENT POLICY COUNCIL MEMBERS

**INFORMAL TELEPHONE QUESTIONS**

**FOR NEW POLICY COUNCIL MEMBERS**

Parent's Name:_____Date:_____

Class Represented:_____School:_____

Child's Name:_____Caller's Name:_____

Subjects to Cover:

WELCOME AGAIN TO THE PROGRAM

WELCOME TO THE POLICY COUNCIL

YOU ARE AN IMPORTANT PART OF HEAD START

THE STAFF VALUES YOUR CONTRIBUTION

Questions to weave into the above during conversation:

1. Were you aware that you will help to make important program decisions?_____(Yes) _____(No)

2. Did you know that further training on the Policy Council will take place? _____(Yes) _____(No)

3. Did you know that the meetings will not take place at your school?_____(Yes) _____(No)

4. Did you know that transportation to the meetings would be offered if you needed it?_____(Yes)_____(No)

5. Were you aware that child care would be available if you needed it?_____(Yes) _____(No)

6. Are there questions or concerns you would like to bring to the Policy Council for attention or consideration?_____(Yes) _____(No)

Further Comments of Parents:_____

_____

# APPENDIX C

## TEACHER INSERVICE TRAINING AGENDA

## ON HEAD START PARENT INVOLVEMENT AND THE POLICY COUNCIL

**AGENDA**

**HEAD START PARENT INVOLVEMENT AND THE POLICY COUNCIL**

**INSERVICE TRAINING FOR TEACHERS**

| | |
|---|---|
| 8:30 | Registration |
| 8:40 | Welcome |
| 8:45 | "Play Ball" Warm Up Activity |
| 9:00 | WHY? |
| | WHAT? |
| | WHERE? |
| 10:00 | Break |
| 10:15 | WHO? |
| | HOW? |
| 11:25 | Sing Along |
| 11:30 | Lunch |
| 12:45 | "Wake Up" Activity |
| 1:00 | POLICY COUNCIL |
| 2:00 | Break |
| 2:15 | CENTER COMMITTEE |
| 3:00 | HEAD START: A NATION'S PRIDE |
| 3:15 | "Play Ball" Closing Activity |
| 3:25 | Inservice Evaluation |

# APPENDIX D

## HEAD START POLICY COUNCIL FACT SHEET

**HEAD START POLICY COUNCIL FACT SHEET**

The Policy Council is a decision-making group which allows parents to play a meaningful role in determining the nature and direction of the program.

**What the Policy Council does:**

- Conducts a program self-evaluation each year.
- Establishes a method of hearing and resolving community complaints about the program.
- Approves or disapproves program plans, budgets, personnel decisions, children's selection criteria, etc.
- Must be consulted in other program-wide issues.
- May be consulted in directing program staff in day to day operations of the center.

**Who is on the Policy Council:**

More than 50% of the Council must be current parents. This includes....

- An elected parent member representing each class or center. (Can vote. Brings back information to the Center Committee.)
- An alternate parent member representing each class or center. (Can vote only in first member's absence.)

****No previous experience is necessary.****
****Training is provided****

The remaining Council members are community representatives elected by the parents.

**When, where, and how often the Policy Council meets:**

The Council meetings are usually held...

- In the morning for approximately one to two hours.
- In a central county location.
- Approximately once a month.

****Transportation and child care are available.****

From the Head Start Policy Manual, Instructions I-30, Section B-2/70.2

# APPENDIX E

## HEAD START CENTER COMMITTEE SAMPLE AGENDA FOR TEACHERS

## CENTER COMMITTEE

Introductory Information:

The Center Committee parent meeting should take place soon after the beginning of the program year. A good "draw" for parents is to invite them to hear or see something the children have already mastered. Of course, the children can come to the meeting, too. For instance, have the children perform a fingerplay or two that they have already learned; or, invite the parents to view the beautiful easel paintings that the children have painted. For the business portion of the program, the children may move with your aide to another Prekindergarten Head Start or kindergarten classroom for games or a story.

## SAMPLE AGENDA

Sign In and Look Around

Welcome by Teacher

Introductions

Brief Program by Children
(If Desired)

Purpose of Center Committee
(Help with Class Decisions,
Activities, etc.)

Elections of Center Committee
Chairperson and Secretary

Policy Council Information
and Fact Sheet

Policy Council Representative and
Alternate Elected

Set Next Center Committee Meeting Date

Adjourn

APPENDIX F

FIRST POLICY COUNCIL MEETING AGENDA
NOVEMBER 9, 1993

**POLICY COUNCIL MEETING AGENDA**

November 9, 1993
9 AM

Coffee

Introductions of All Present

Presentations to
Former Policy Council
Members by Staff

Seek Volunteer to Take Minutes

Call Meeting to Order

Training:
- Video - Head Start,
  A Nation's Pride
- Review 70.2
- Review Policy Council By-Laws

Formation of Standing Committees

Coffee Break

Personnel Approval

Election of Executive Board

Approval of Community Members

Volunteers For:
- Health Services Advisory
  Committee
- County Preschool Interagency
  Council
- Even Start Task Force

Parent Involvement Fund Discussion

Set Next Meeting Date

Adjournment of Policy Council Meeting

Standing Committees Gather to Set
Meeting Dates